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ABSTRACT

Beginning with the 1985-86 school year, the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) tests have been based on the objectives provided in this publication for teachers and test development specialists. The writing skills objectives for grade 7 require: (1) knowledge of standard capitalization; (2) knowledge of standard punctuation; (3) ability to recognize correct spelling of common words; (4) knowledge of correct English usage; (5) ability to distinguish complete sentences; (6) ability to proofread a written communication; (7) ability to write a description; (8) ability to write a composition telling how to do something; (9) ability to contrast and compare two subjects in a written composition; and (10) ability to write a composition supporting an argument. Test examples are given for each objective. (SLD)

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Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills

Writing Objectives and Measurement Specifications 1986-1990 Grade 7

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Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills

Writing Objectives and Measurement Specifications 1986-1990 Grade 7

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Division of Student Assessment
Texas Education Agency
Austin, Texas

FOREWORD

The learning objectives contained in this volume are congruent with the State Board of Education Rules for Curriculum which outlines the rules and procedures for implementation of Section 21.101 of the Texas Education Code. These objectives and the measurement specifications are provided for use by teachers and other educators responsible for pupil instruction and for test development specialists involved with the preparation of the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) tests. Beginning with the 1985-86 school year, the TEAMS tests were based upon the objectives in this publication.

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TEXAS EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF MINIMUM SKILLS

GRADE 7 WRITING

List of Objectives

Skill Area: Mechanics

Objective 1. Demonstrate knowledge of standard uses of capitalization.

Objective 2. Demonstrate knowledge of standard punctuation.

Objective 3. Recognize the correct spelling of commonly used words.

Skill Area: English Usage

Objective 4. Demonstrate knowledge of correct English usage.

Skill Area: Sentence Formation

Objective 5. Demonstrate the ability to distinguish complete sentences from fragments and/or run-ons.

Skill Area: Proofreading

Objective 6. Demonstrate the ability to proofread a written communication.

Skill Area: Organization/Appropriate Response to Purpose and Audience*

Objective 7. Write a composition to describe an object or picture.

Objective 8. Write a composition to tell how to do something.

Objective 9. Write a composition which explains the likenesses and differences or the advantages and disadvantages of two simple ideas/objects/places.

Objective 10. Write a composition in which a choice is made and reasons that would support the choice and convince a specified audience are presented.

* Only one objective in this skill area will be measured each year.

GRADE 7 WRITING

General Specifications

I. Test Items

A. Sentences used in the test will be developed using only those words contained in the Texas Education Agency (TEA) cumulative vocabulary list through Grade 7. Proper nouns and words explained in the text are excluded from this requirement.

B. Sentences will be of varying lengths and will not exceed 17 words in length.

C. Simple, compound, and complex sentences will be used.

D. Sentences will have content that is appropriate to the interests and experiences of seventh grade students.

E. Sentences will represent various ethnic groups of populations in Texas. The three main groups are black, Hispanic, and white.

F. The sentences and items will be free of stereotyping by age, sex, ethnicity, and geographical location.

II. Answer Choices

A. For each item, there will be four answer choices with only one correct answer.

B. Neither "none of the above" nor "all of the above" will be used as an answer choice.

C. Except where noted otherwise, all words in the items, including the answer choices, will be taken from the TEA cumulative vocabulary list through Grade 7. Proper nouns and words explained in the text are excluded from this requirement.

III. Test Package Format

A. The test will be printed in black ink on white paper.

B. Type size will be appropriate for seventh grade students.

C. Test items and their corresponding answer choices will appear on the same page.

D. Graphic displays and their corresponding test items and answer choices will appear on the same or facing pages.

OBJECTIVES AND MEASUREMENT SPECIFICATIONS

SKILL AREA: MECHANICS

Objective 1

Demonstrate knowledge of standard uses of capitalization.

Description of Test Items/Answer Choices

1. Four different answer choices will be presented. Each answer choice will be either a complete sentence or a saluation or closing of a friendly letter. Only one answer choice will have no capitalization errors.

2. The correct answer choice will illustrate correct capitalization of one or more of the following:

   a. the first word in a sentence,

   b. the pronoun "I,"

   c. names of persons,

   d. names of familiar nationalities and languages,

   e. names of the days of the week,

   f. names of the months of the year,

   g. names of cities, states, and countries,

   h. titles of persons (limited to Dr., Mr., Mrs., Miss, and Ms.),

   i. names of holidays,

   j. the salutation and the closing of a letter, and

   k. avoidance of unnecessary capitalization.

3. An incorrect answer choice will illustrate one of the following errors:

   a. not capitalizing the first word in a sentence,

   b. not capitalizing the pronoun "I,"

   c. not capitalizing a person's name,

   d. not capitalizing the names of holidays, days of the week, months of the year, cities, states, countries, familiar nationalities and languages, or the titles of persons,

e. not capitalizing the salutation and the closing of a letter, or

f. including unnecessary capitalization.

4. Each incorrect answer choice in an item will illustrate a different error.

Example of Test Item

Choose the word group that has no errors in capitalization.

A	My aunt told Mrs. Ramirez that I would be absent.	(correct answer)
B	We lived in France, but I didn't learn to speak french.	(not capitalizing the name of a familiar language)
C	Our club meets on the first Tuesday of every Month.	(unnecessary capitalization)
D	The class chose hector to lead the discussion.	(Not capitalizing a person's name)

SKILL AREA: MECHANICS

Objective 2

Demonstrate knowledge of standard punctuation.

Description of Test Items/Answer Choices

1. Four different answer choices will be presented. Each answer choice will be either a complete sentence or a salutation or closing of a friendly letter. Only one answer choice will be punctuated correctly.

2. The correct answer choice will illustrate the proper usage of one or more of the following:

   a. a period after abbreviations and at the end of declarative and imperative statements,

   b. a question mark at the end of interrogative sentences,

   c. a comma between city and state, between words in a series, following the salutation of a friendly letter, and following the closing of a letter*, and

   d. an apostrophe in contractions and in singular possessives.

3. An incorrect answer choice will illustrate one of the following errors:

   a. omitting a period after abbreviations,

   b. omitting punctuation at the end of a sentence,

   c. substituting a period for a question mark at the end of an interrogative sentence,

   d. omitting a comma between between city and state, between words in a series, following the salutation of a friendly letter, and following the closing of a letter*,

   e. omitting or misplacing an apostrophe in singular possessives and in contractions,

   f. using unnecessary commas (e.g., between the subject and verb of a sentence), or

   g. using unnecessary apostrophes (e.g., in possessive pronouns).

4. Each incorrect answer choice in an item will illustrate a different error.

* Students will not be tested on the use of the comma before "and" or "or" in a series.

Example of Test Item

Choose the word group that has the correct punctuation.

A	Independence Hall is located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.	(correct answer)
B	Thats where the Declaration of Independence was signed.	(omitting an apostrophe in a contraction)
C	Why did the colonists object to British laws.	(substituting a period for a question mark at the end of an interrogative sentence)
D	British policies threatened the interests of merchants traders, and other taxpayers.	(omitting comma between words in a series)

SKILL AREA: MECHANICS

Objective 3

Recognize the correct spelling of commonly used words.

Description of Test Items

1. The item will consist of a sentence containing a blank line to represent the word to be tested.

2. The word to be tested will exhibit regular sound-symbol correspondence.

3. The word to be tested will be selected from the TEA spelling list for Grade 7. Neither contractions nor homonyms will be eligible for testing.

Description of Answer Choices

1. Three incorrectly spelled versions of the missing word will be presented as well as the correctly spelled version of the word.

2. Among incorrect answer choices, the most common misspellings of the word to be tested will be presented.

Example of Test Item

Choose the correct spelling of the word that goes in the blank.

Henry's composition contained many _____ ideas.

A original (correct answer)

B origenal (incorrect answer)

C orriginal (incorrect answer)

D originel (incorrect answer)

SKILL AREA: ENGLISH USAGE

Objective 4

Demonstrate knowledge of correct English usage.

Description of Test Items/Answer Choices

1. Four different sentences will be presented. Only one sentence will have no errors in English usage.

2. The verb conjugations that are used in the answer choices will be in the past, present, present perfect, or future tense or in the continuous present or past tense (e.g., "is running" or "was running").

3. The correct answer choice will illustrate one or more of the following:

   a. correct subject-verb agreement in person and number with no interruption between subject and verb,

   b. correct form for all regular and common irregular verbs,

   c. correct nominative forms of pronouns as subject,

   d. correct comparative and superlative forms of adjectives,

   e. correct word choice, and

   f. avoidance of double negatives (The use of "scarcely" and "hardly" will not be tested.).

4. An incorrect answer choice will be a sentence illustrating one of the following errors:

   a. lack of subject-verb agreement,

      (1) a verb and its subject do not agree in number (e.g., "Jan's sweater were lost at the pep rally.") or

      (2) a verb and its subject do not agree in person (e.g., "He don't answer the telephone very often.").

   b. incorrect conjugation,

      (1) an irregular verb is conjugated as if it were regular (e.g., "Yesterday I writed a letter to my aunt.") or

      (2) the past participle is used as a past tense in place of a compound verb (e.g., "We seen him at the game yesterday.").

   c. use of the objective form of a pronoun as a subject (e.g., "Me and Johnny went to the show."),

d. incorrect comparative and superlative forms of adjectives,

(1) the comparative or superlative form shows a double comparison (e.g., "This is the more better of the two books." or "This is the most best book.") or

(2) "er" or "est" is added to an adjective to form incorrectly the comparative or superlative (e.g., "My cousin is the capablest in her class.").

e. incorrect word choice, that is, the wrong word is used in the sentence (e.g., "Do not leave the door slam shut."), or

f. use of double negatives (e.g., "We don't have no books.").

5. Each incorrect answer choice in an item will illustrate a different error.

Example of Test Item

Choose the sentence that is written correctly.

A	Jack was attracted to the beautiful white stallion.	(correct answer)
B	He's not going to break no records at the track meet.	(double negative)
C	We been at the beach for the last two weeks.	(past participle used as past tense)
D	Harry is more taller than his brother.	(comparative form shows a double comparison)

SKILL AREA: MECHANICS

Objective 5

Demonstrate the ability to distinguish complete sentences from fragments and/or run-ons.

Description of Test Items/Answer Choices

1. Four answer choices will be presented. Each answer choice will begin with a capital letter and end with a period.

2. The correct answer choice will be the complete sentence. This sentence will follow normal sentence order (e.g., subject-verb-complement, subject-verb-modifier, or subject-verb-object).

3. An incorrect answer choice will be one of the following types of incomplete sentences:

   a. a word group with a subject but no predicate (e.g., "The man who came to dinner.")

   b. a word group with a predicate but no subject (Sentences with "you" as an implied subject, e.g., "Close the door," will not be tested.)

   c. one or more prepositional phrases

   d. one or more participial phrases

   e. two independent clauses with no period between the two, or

   f. two independent clauses with a comma and no conjunction between the two.

Example of Test Item

Choose the group of words that is a complete sentence (not a sentence fragment or a run-on).

A	The library is sponsoring a party for all seventh graders.	(correct answer)
B	Books containing fables, poems, and stories from many lands.	(word group with a subject but no predicate)
C	The displays were attractive and amusing, they contained puppets.	(two independent clauses with a comma and no conjunction between the two)
D	Listening to vivid facts and exciting fantasy.	(prepositional phrases)

SKILL AREA: PROOFREADING

Objective 6

Demonstrate the ability to proofread a written statement.

Description of Test Items/Answer Choices

1. Four lines of text will be presented. Each line will be one test item. Following each line will be an answer choice labeled "no mistake." After the first sentence, only one other sentence may begin at the beginning of a new line.

2. The four lines of text will comprise a narration or a description.

3. Each line of text will not exceed 15 words in length.

4. Three parts of each line of text will be underlined. One part may contain an error in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or usage. Only the errors defined in objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4 are eligible for testing. If one underlined part contains a mistake, the other two underlined parts will contain no mistakes.

5. An underlined part will include one or more words and/or numbers.

6. An underlined part will include no more than one error.

7. Underlined parts occurring at the end of a sentence will extend beyond the last word or number to indicate that the subsequent punctuation or lack of punctuation will be considered.

8. Underlined parts occurring within a sentence may extend beyond the words or numbers to indicate that the subsequent punctuation mark or lack of punctuation will be considered.

9. Whenever a date is tested, the entire date will be underlined.

10. Whenever a city and state are tested together, the entire group of words will be underlined.

11. Whenever the title of a person is tested, the person's full name and title will be underlined.

Example of Test Item

Read each line of the passage. On EACH line, look for a mistake in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or in the way a word is used. If you find a mistake in an underlined part, mark the letter of that part on your answer folder. If you don't find a mistake on a line, mark answer choice D or H.

President Abraham Lincoln (A) speaked (B) at Gettysburg (C) on	No Mistake (D)
November 19, 1863. (E) His (F) brief adress, (G) delivered	No Mistake (H)
for the dedication (A) of a Military Cemetery, (B) was shorter (C) than	No Mistake (D)
five minutes. (E) It has been called one of the greatest (F) American (G) speeches.	No Mistake (H)

—7—

SKILL AREA: ORGANIZATION/APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

Objective 7

Write a composition to describe an object or picture.

Description of Test Items

1. The item stimulus will elicit a composition that has an informative purpose and is written in the descriptive mode.

2. The item stimulus will ask the student to describe an object or what he or she sees in a picture that is given. The specified audience will be appropriate school personnel, other adults, a classmate, "someone else," or a friend. Verbal cues that focus the student's attention on the object or picture will be given in the stimulus.

3. If a picture is given, it will consist of either a scene or a single object familiar to seventh graders. The picture will be either fanciful or realistic and must be relatively simple. Visual cues will be present that focus the student's attention on the task. No extraneous details will be included in the picture.

4. If an object to be identified is not pictured, the object must be familiar to seventh grade students so that they can write about it.

5. The vocabulary needed to describe the picture or object that is given will not exceed that required of seventh graders, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list through Grade 7.

6. The item stimulus will appeal to the interests and/or experiences of seventh grade students.

Description of Successful Responses

The composition will have an informative purpose, be written in a descriptive mode, and respond in a manner appropriate to the specified audience. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for seventh grade students.

1. The description should be specific and elaborated. The writer should describe a lengthy set of features elaborated through the use of figurative language and/or rich precise detail should be presented. The description should paint a vivid picture of the object or scene in the mind of the reader by using picturesque words and/or sophisticated sentence structure.

2. The response should be consistent in its organizational strategy. Usually the writer will select one feature and describe it fully before moving on to another feature. Frequently, the writer will include the locations of features described and delineate the relationship of one feature to another.

3. The response remains on topic from beginning to end and does not digress into an expressive/narrative piece. The writer may frame the description with narration or interject expressive elements, but these enhance the description rather than detract from it.

Example of Test Item

Look around the room in which you are now seated. Write a description of this room to inform someone else so that this person can picture the room in his or her mind.

SKILL AREA: ORGANIZATION/APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

Objective 8

Write a composition to tell how to do something.

Description of Test Items

1. The item stimulus will elicit a composition that has an informative purpose and is written in the narrative mode.

2. The item stimulus will ask the student to tell how to do something. The specified audience will be appropriate school personnel, other adults, a classmate, "someone else," or a friend. Verbal cues that focus the student's attention on the task will be given in the picture.

3. The item will include a pictorial stimulus, or it will specify a process that is to be explained.

4. If a pictorial stimulus is given, it will consist of a scene, a single object, or a series of pictures familiar to seventh graders. Visual cues will be given in the picture to focus the student's attention on the task.

5. If a specified process is to be explained, the process must be familiar to seventh graders so that they will be able to write about it.

6. The vocabulary needed to describe the picture or process that is specified will not exceed that required of seventh grade students, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list through Grade 7.

7. The item stimulus will appeal to the interests and/or experiences of seventh grade students.

Description of Successful Responses

The composition will have an informative purpose and be written in the narrative mode. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for seventh grade students.

1. The composition should delineate the steps needed to complete the specified task and should sequentially order these steps.

2. Each step presented should be unambiguous, specific, and elaborated so that the step could be replicated by another individual.

3. The response should be consistent in its organizational strategy. A logical sequence of steps will be presented. Usually the writer will describe each step fully before moving on to another step.

Example of Test Item

Explain to a friend how to prepare your favorite food. Tell what you would do first, and then tell what other things you would do.

SKILL AREA: ORGANIZATION/APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

Objective 9

Write a composition which explains the likenesses and differences or the advantages and disadvantages of two simple ideas/objects/places.

Description of Test Items

1. The item stimulus will elicit a composition that has an informative purpose and is written in the classificatory mode.

2. The item stimulus will ask the student to classify two or more ideas/objects/places. Verbal cues that focus the student's attention on the task will be given in the stimulus. The specified audience will be appropriate school personnel, other adults, a classmate, "someone else," or a friend.

3. The item will include a pictorial stimulus, or it will simply specify the ideas/objects/places to be discussed.

4. If a pictorial stimulus is given, it will consist of a series of pictures of objects/places that are to be classified. These objects/places will be familiar to seventh graders. Visual cues that focus the student's attention on the task will be given.

5. If ideas/objects/places are merely identified in the question, they will be familiar to seventh grade students so that they can write about them.

6. The vocabulary needed to write the composition will not exceed that required of seventh grade students, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list through Grade 7.

7. The item stimulus will appeal to the interests and/or experiences of seventh grade students.

Description of Successful Responses

The response will have an informative purpose and be written in the classificatory mode. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for seventh grade students.

1. In the composition the designated ideas/objects/places should be classified in a logical way in response to the specified audience.

2. Information presented about the designated ideas/objects/places should be specific and elaborated.

3. The response should be consistent in its organizational strategy. Relationships between the ideas delineated should be clear.

4. The response remains on topic from beginning to end. When personal anecdotes or other rhetorical devices are used, they enhance the response.

Example of Test Item

Think about the ways in which a dog and a cat are alike. Think about the ways in which they are different. Write a composition for your teacher in which you explain how a dog and a cat are alike and how they are different. You should include more than just a description of the appearance of the two animals.

—7—

SKILL AREA: ORGANIZATION/APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

Objective 10

Write a composition in which a choice is made and reasons that would support the choice and convince a specified audience are presented.

Description of Test Items

1. The item stimulus will elicit a composition that has a persuasive purpose and is written in a descriptive mode.

2. The item stimulus will ask the student to make a choice and present convincing reasons for the choice to a specified audience. The specified audience will be appropriate school personnel, other adults, a classmate, "someone else," or a friend. Verbal cues will be given in the item to focus the student's attention on the task.

3. The item will include a pictorial stimulus, or it will simply specify options among which a choice must be made.

4. If a pictorial stimulus is given, it will consist of either a scene, or a single object, or a series of pictures familiar to seventh graders. Visual cues will be presented to focus the student's attention on the task.

5. If the options among which a choice must be made are merely identified in the stimulus, the options must be familiar to seventh graders so that they can write about them.

6. The vocabulary needed to write the composition will not exceed that required of seventh grade students, as defined by the TEA cumulative vocabulary list through Grade 7.

7. The item stimulus will appeal to the interests and/or experiences of seventh grade students.

Description of Successful Responses

The response will have a persuasive purpose and be written in the descriptive mode. The level of expectation for student performance will be appropriate for seventh grade students. In the composition, the student will make a choice among the options presented and will provide reasons for the choice that are presented in a logical, unified way and are convincing to a specified audience.

1. The response should contain sufficient elaboration of reasons to make them understood clearly and to be convincing in support of the writer's stated choice.

2. The response should contain a clear sense of order and completeness as evidenced by effective use of transitional, introductory, and concluding elements.

3. The response should contain highly effective word choice characterized by accuracy, precision, and clarity.

4. The response should be characterized by an overall fluency in the expression of ideas.

Example of Test Item

Your class has earned enough money to go on a class trip to a place close to your town. Choose a nearby place that you would like your class to visit. Write a letter to your teacher and present convincing reasons for your choice.

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; TITLE IX, 1973 EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; AND VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED IN 1974.

It is the policy of the Texas Education Agency to comply fully with the nondiscrimination provisions of all federal and state laws and regulations by assuring that no person shall be excluded from consideration for recruitment, selection, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or any other personnel action, or be denied any benefits or participation in any programs or activities which it operates on the grounds of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, handicap, age, or veteran status (except where age, sex, or handicap constitute a bona fide occupational qualification necessary to proper and efficient administration). The Texas Education Agency makes positive efforts to employ and advance in employment all protected groups.

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